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THE

MERRY FROLICS

OR THE

COMICAL CHEATS OF

SWALPO

A NOTORIOUS PICKPOCKET.

AND THE

MERRY PRANKS

OF

ROGER THE CLOWN

SEVEN DIALS:

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THE MERRY
FROLICS
OF
SWALPO,

CHAP. I.

How he stole a Broad piece of Gold out of a Countryman's Mouth.

SWALPO dressed himself like a countryman with a pair of dirty boots, and a whip in his hand, and going into Bartholomew Fair met with no prize worth speaking on, but walking out of the Fair; at the entrance into the Fair he met with a countryman, and said to him, honest friend have a care of your pockets, for you are going into a bad place, where are none but rogues and pickpockets, I am almost ruined by them, and am glad they have not picked my teeth out of my head, let one take ever so much care of our pockets, they'll be sure of your money, I'm sure the devil helps them. I defy all the devils that be, says the countryman, to rob me of anything of value; I have a broad piece that I'll secure. So clapping it into his mouth, he went

confidently into the fair. Swalpo desired n more than to know if he had any money and where it lay; he gives a sign to a hopeful boy of his, and telling him out some sixpences and groats, told him what he should do.

The boy immediately runs, and falls down just before the countryman, and scattering the money, starts up and roars like a bedlam, crying, He was undone, he must run away from his apprenticeship, his master was such a furious fellow he would certainly kill him. The countryman with the people, gathered about, helping the boy to take up the money, says one of them,

have you found all? Yes, all the silver, says the boy but what does that signifiy, there's a broad piece of gold that I was conveying to my master for a token sent from the country, and I, like a fool, must come through this unlucky place to ose it; I shall be killed, what will become of me?

Swalpo coming up tells some of the bystanders who were plying the boy, he observed that country fellow there stoop, and put something into his mouth, whereupon they flew upon him, and one of them wresting open his chops, made him spit out the gold and some blood along with it. Endeavouring to speak for himself, they kicked him, pushed him and tossed him about, and some calling to pity and pump, he was glad to call for mercy, and thought himself richer than the great Turk when he got out of their clutches; the boy in the meantime slips into the crowd and goes to Swalpo with the gold where he used to find him.

CHAP. II.

How Swalpo staying in the Tavern, stole a gentleman's watch, as he walked in Moorfields.

SWALPO afterwards found the countryman's master was a Knight, and possessed of va

estate in the North, and took from his pocket a great many guineas. The gentleman lined his pockets again with gold, and went once more to the Exchange, being determined to know who this clever thief could be. After his pocket was again picked, chance threw him in his way, and being well pleased with his ingenious acquaintance, made up his mind to sojourn to a tavern, where Swalpo agreed to show all his handicraft before the gentry.

When the gentry came, Swalpo told them many things to their admiration and satisfaction, and when he pulled out his piece of gold and told them how he had served Roger the gentleman's tenant, Roger was immediately sent for to make up the frolic. When he came in, 'twas good sport to see how he scraped on the ground. His master smiling asked of whom he learnt to

make such a handsome leg, of jowler, my brown cow, Sir, said Roger. What would you say says the knight, if you saw your gold again. Ah says he, I wish I could, but if my mouth cant keep it, where should I put it. 'Sbud, I'd rather see the rogue, I'd make a jelly of his bones. There he is, says the knight, and there's your broad piece.

As Roger began to heave and bulk, his master commmanded him to take his gold, and sit

down by him; Roger seeing which way things went, drank to Swalpo, One of the gentlemen pulling out a curious watch, another said he wondered how it was possible for them to pick a watch out of a fob, and that it was certainly carelessness. No, said Swalpo if the gentleman will take a turn or two in Moorfields, I'll wager a guinea I'll have the watch before he returns, let

him take what care he pleases, and I shant stir out of this room. Done, says the gentleman, Done, says Roger, 'Sdiggers he'll steal your livers if he says he'll do it. However, every gentleman in the room laying down a guinea, Roger laid down his broad piece, and bore his half. The gentleman went out with his watch, and as he walked was very careful not to suffer man, woman or child to come within arms length of him, thinking the devil was in it if any body could rob him at a distance.

When it was almost time he should return, a boy came softly behind him, yet not so near as to give the gentleman any suspicion; as he passes him he looks over his shoulder, and tells the gentleman his back was covered with huge lice, which he perceiving, loathed the sight, fretting and wondering where he had been that day. Good boy, says he, take them off, and I'll give you a shilling. The boy does so, and picking the lice off his back, and the watch out of his fob, he received his reward and run. The gentleman returns to the tavern, wondering all the way how he could have come by so much vermin, yet carefully avoiding any that came near him all the way.

When he returned Swalpo asked him what o'clock it was by his watch; which thinking to pull out he was amazed to find it gone. Swalpo pulls it out, asked if that was it, the gentleman stood as dumb as a fish, turning up the white of his eyes. Roger laughed so loud and outrageously, that after the gentleman had borne him company a good while the knight was forced to command him silence, for he would have laughed all night. The gentleman full of amazement said, certainly he must have had the assistance of a devil. Of a boy says Swalpo, did not a boy pick you clean?

there's the devil' says the gentleman, and he threw them on too, I suppose. Aye, thro' a quill says Swalpo.

CHAP. III.

How Swalpo stole the Coat off a Nobleman's back before all his train.

THE whole company were mightily pleased with the ingenuity of the last trick, especially Roger who could not forget how the gentleman looked when he came and missed his watch, and was now and then burning out into a laughter. Says Swalpo, alas, Gentlemen, the trick is not worth the talking of, it is such a thing as we send our body about.

There's a nobleman goes now by the window with a very rich coat on, I'll wager as before, I'll steall it from off his back before all his followers, and bring it hither on my own. The gentlemen each staked a guinea, and Swalpo and Roger covered em' as before.

Now says Swalpo, I am to shew you a masterpiece of my art; I must not send a boy about it,

but crave leave to go myself, neither can I see a time for my return, but I hope to do it sooner than you imagine. So out he runs, and dodging the nobleman was conducted up stairs; Swalpo goes to the bar-keeper, and desired him to lend him an apron, for the nobleman my master, wherever he comes, will be served by none but myself he is a very good customer, and expects the best of wine, I must go down into the cellar and taste it for him. Whereupon they let him have the apron, and he went into the cellar, soon

found out the best of every sort. He ran so nimbly up and down the stairs, and was so quick at his work, none of the servants kept pace with him. The company looked upon him to be a servant of the house, and were mightily pleased with his quickness and diligence, and the goodness of the wine and everything he brought them. Swalpo promised him that should have attended the room large vails, and he was very well satisfied to receive money for doing nothing. Swalpo never came into the room but he passed some merry jest, which pleased them wonderfully, and when he went for more wine they said one to another, this is a merry witty fellow, such a one as he is fit to make a house, he deserves double

wages. When Swalpo had sufficiently amused the company, and saw his project ripe for execution, he was resolved to trifle no longer, wherefore when he returned into the room with some wine, and as he passed by my lord he laid hold of the opportunity, and with the incision knife which he used in pocket picking, he nicely and with admirable daxterity made a slit in the back seam of my lord's coat, and runs down staire for more liquor.

When he returned with a bottle in one hand and the other full of glasss, before he came near my lord, Swalpo starts, saying, what cobling fellows are they that make this coat, could they not sew a coat to hold one day, this cabbage monger deserved the pillory before for filching, but now grudging to allow another stich, has committed a Scandarum Magnatum, and caused my lord to go in a rent coat, the first day of

wearing perhaps. Some of the company rising and seeing the great slash, told my lord the tailor had affronted him, Says my lord I gave the fellows sufficient vails, and both they and their master shall hear of it. My lord, says Swalpo, tis only the end of a thread has slipt, such things will happen sometimes. the coat may be faithfully sewed in other places, its not a farthing the worse there's a curious fine drawer of my acquaintance lives in the next lane, be pleased to let me carry it to him, he will make it as good as at first. Ill carry it secretly under my masters cloak, and return with it before you want more wine. The

nobleman borrows a great coat. Swalpo comes down to the Vintner, tells him what had happened to his lords coat, and to prevent its being seen in the street, desires him to let him have a cloak and he would return immediately. The vintner shewed him where the cloak was, which Swalpo put on, and claps the vintners beaver on his head, which hung on the next pin. Thus he troops off with them, and coming to the tavern where the gentlemen were, he went into a room, and having put on the nobleman's coat, the cloak and beaver he came into the room where they sat,

saluting them very civilly. Says one of them, what, instead of a coat you come with a cloak, and great need of it, for there's a deal of knavery under it. So opening the cloak they were all amazed to see the rich embroidered coat, besides the cloak and beaver, which he told them he had got into the bargain. Then Roger laughed as loud as a dozen of trumpeters, but when Swalpo told them how he had performed the exploit, and related all the comical circumstances of it with a deal of air and wit, there was as great a noise of laughter as ever was heard, and Roger with his great base made up the concert.

CHAP. IV.

How Swalpo stole a large Silver Tankard, to the great admiration of the company.

ONE of the knights looking out at the window saw in the window over the way a huge tankard, but very old fashioned. Swalpo was called and asked if he could steal that tankard. he told them he would go over the way and fetch it them, but he must not be confined to time, and Roger must go along with him. Roger hearing this was overjoyed, fancying he should gain the reputation

of a second Swalpo, when they went out, Swalpo bid him go to such a poulterer's and buy a couple of pheasants the best he could find, and return to such a tavern. When Roger returned, he found Swalpo with an apron about him like a drawer. Swalpo takes the pheasants, and goes to the merchants house where the tankard was; he was certain he was not within, because Swalpo's boy had followed him to the Change. He desires to speak with the merchant's lady, and tells her the gentleman naming, her husband was in a tavern near the change about some earnest business, and a goldsmith happening to be in the company had persuaded him to send for the quaint old fashioned tankard to be changed for a fashionable one; and because there was a couple of gentlemen in the company he had invited to dine with him, he desired the dinner should be carefully dressed, and the pheasant roasted, and the new tankard should be sent home by that time. Pray heaven, bless my husband, says she, and continue the good temper he is in; I have talked to him these seven years about this lumbering cup, and he did nothing but banter me about it, Heaven keep him from sudden mischief I'll either have it as good as my lady such a one in St. James's, or I'll send it back again. Full of joy she received the pheasants, and delivered the tankard to Swalpo. When the merchant came home his lady met him as well dressed and as well pleased as a young bride: she flew about his neck kissed him twenty times, and gave him an hundred thousand thanks for the tankard and pheasants; and pray honey, says she, where are the gentleman? and pray honey, says he, where are your wits? Hey day, my wife is distracted. It was a pretty while before they could understand one another, and then instead of an-

ing she went into her chamber to cry, and he to Lombard-street to cause the tankard to be stopped if offered for sale.

CHAP. V.

How Roger sets up for a wit and brought off the Pheasants to the Tavern where my Lord and his master were.

ROGER seeing so much ingenuity, was inflamed with a desire of shewing his parts to. What, says he, shall I come to London, and be in such good company, and see and hear of so much wit, and have nothing to say of my own exploits when I get home? how will Joan andthe whole parish stare at me if I can do such things as these. Away he goes, dresses himself like a porter and goes in haste to the merchantt's lady, telling her, her husband was at the Swan in Cornhill with a goldsmith, who had stopped his tankard, and had catched the rogue, and prayed her to come immedately to the Swan and see the rogue before he was sent to Newgate. Dear heart, said she what a happy woman am I, I'll go see him there, I'll see him at Newgate, I'll see him at Tyburn with a vengeance to him. But, says Roger my master is very hungry, and wou'd have you send him the couple of pheasants, that the thief may see you and my master eat them before his eyes, and come along with me. Roger receiving them, and the lady having her head to dress a little, told him she new the place well enough, and would be there soon. Roger brings the pheasants to my lord and his company, which action caused as much mirth as anything that had been done before, especially considering how clownishly he looked and spoke; but they were mistaken as to him, for he was more knave than fool, a sly dog, as you shall know.

The lady coming to the Swan, enquired for her husband, they told her he had not been there that day, this answer struck her dumb for a while, and they seeing her in a great confusion, thought she was looking for her spark, and so began to banter her, then telling a lame story of her being robbed, and asking some impertinent questions as they fancied about a tankard and a pheasant they felt a laughing at her. Being of a high spirit, she raged extremely at them, but could not help herself, and fearing to be mobbed, she posted home to vent her grief there, and finding her husband just come in, told him how she had been served. Aye, aye, says he, we are close beset I find what twice in an hour, if they go on at this rate they won't leave me worth a groat, and in the day time too, cunning rogues. Say's he I'll give a thousand pounds to see him hanged.

While they were fretting and talking thus, and the lady roaring as loud as she could, the master of the tavern where my lord was, comes in and tells them, the two rogues that had cheated them were in his house and in safe custody, and if they pleased to walk over, they should see them, and drink out of their own tankard, and eat a share of the pheasants. Fearing no more danger they joyfully went over the way to their neighbours where the gentry were just going to dine, but they wondered what was the meaning of the rogues sitting at the table with them, and especially clumsy Roger, whom they had for jests sake, set at the head of the table with his hat on, and all the others were uncovered. The lady not understanding the meaning of all this, was a little uneasy at the sight of them, who had put so great an affront and abuse upon her, but was wonderfully satisfied when one of the company told her all from beginning to end.

Never was dinner more merrily eaten than that was; but when they came to the pheasants, my lord who sat next Roger, desired him to shew his art in carving a pheasant, telling him that he had the greatest right of any at the table to dispose of it, since it was the purchase of his own ingenuity Roger readily undertook it tho' he knew no more how to carve than a cow. Well, gentlemen, says Roger, since you would see my skill in carving shall I do it after the French, English, Dutch or Welch way, the Welch way says my lord

Then he pulls out a large butcher's knife, and by great strength cuts it through the middle, then by cutting it across, he divided into four parts, next into eight, and keeping the four best to himself, he delivered the rest, by this means they were kept in ignorance whether Roger could break up the fowl or no, and they laughed heartily at his cunning ingenuity in doing it.

Soon after this, having discharged the reckoning, every one departed to their own habitation, and Roger went down into the country to his wife Joan.